

ENGLISH POLICY IN CHINA.

From the London Saturday Review.

Some China correspondence which has recently been issued, while it shows that there are two sides to the questions which have been discussed in Parliament, on the whole fully justifies Lord Clarendon's stringent instructions. A general monotony, including much variety of detail, characterizes the numerous quarrels between the inhabitants of the country and their unwelcome guests. When a merchant or a missionary has contracted for the purchase of premises, it sometimes happens that, with or without the connivance of the vendor and the local authorities, a mob prevents the purchaser from taking possession of his property. Occasionally goods belonging to English owners are the subject of a production of all proper documents; or a trader passing near a village is pelted or assaulted by natives who are as hostile to strangers as if they lived in the midland counties. The consular agent on the spot at once adopts the cause of his countrymen; and if a gunboat is within reach he requests the aid of the officer in command, who is only too happy to find exercise for the energies of himself and his crew. At the outset it would seem that the Chinese are for the most part to be pitied; but if the correspondence accurately represents the state of affairs, there is no foundation for the charges which have been made against the upper classes. The gentry or literary graduates, who were lately denounced in Parliament, have had little or nothing to do with the outrages which have furnished an excuse for retaliation. In the only instance in which one of their body had instigated a riot, the culprit, when he was arrested in compliance with the demands of the Vice-Consul, was found to be a half-witted man of seventy, who was, even in the opinion of his accusers, scarcely a proper object of punishment. The officers of the Government, although they may probably not be disinclined to screen delinquents, almost always reply to the reclamations of the Consuls with courteous professions and promises; but experience shows that both the mandarins and the population are the most deferential when a zealous lieutenant, with a Vice-Consul at his back, has taken a fort, or fired a few volleys of musketry among an armed village rabble. A petition from the inhabitants of a place called Tang-tun, which had been punished with lawless severity for some irregularity of the kind, is touching in the helplessness which it indicates. The villagers say that "on the 8th of this month some children, seeing your great country's war-boats passing, were much frightened, and, running away, foolishly excited our people to attack them; for which the great army has entered our village and punished us. We repeat our fault fully, and, prostrating ourselves, beg undeserved that mercy may be shown us, and promise that, men and women, we will one and all live peaceably and quietly for coming generations under your favor." Trusting that the great Consul will bear our prayers, etc." In this case, which is the worst recorded in the correspondence, Commodore Oliver Jones, acting apparently under the orders of Sir H. Keppel, the commander-in-chief, had burnt part of a village, and almost destroyed a town of 7000 inhabitants, in consequence of some shots which had been fired on the boats of the gunboat Cochecher. Admiral Keppel will perhaps hereafter be able to explain a seeming breach of faith with the Viceroy, who had undertaken himself to punish the offenders, receiving the promise of the Admiral to abstain from independent action. It is due to the Consul, Mr. Robertson, to record his open disapprobation of Commodore Jones' unfortunate exploit.

In the vast empire of China there are wide differences of character and civilization. Some of the collisions reported in the correspondence occurred in the island of Formosa, where an aboriginal population under Chinese rulers is still so deficient in refinement as to practise cannibalism. It is not surprising that in such a country missionaries should be exposed to inconvenience; and the religious difficulty is aggravated by the fact that the English merchants and Chinese traders who formerly possessed a monopoly of the staple commodity of camphor. In consequence of various grievances for which no redress could be obtained, Mr. Gibson, the Acting Consul, induced Lieutenant Gordon to seize a town and a fort as a security for the concession of a string of demands. The operation was effected with laudable skill and courage; but it is satisfactory to find that the civil and military officers have been sharply reprimanded, and that Lord Clarendon had both removed Mr. Gibson from his post, and instructed the English Ambassador to signify his regret to the Chinese Government. Sir H. Keppel had previously directed the return of a large sum of money which had been exacted from the local authorities, but in other respects he approved of Lieutenant Gordon's conduct. It is perhaps desirable that pugnacity should be tolerated in sailors; but the naval commander-in-chief has shown, on more than one occasion, an imperfect apprehension of the rights which belong even to the Chinese. The English Government, in concluding the treaty of Tientsin, insisted on the residence of an envoy at the Court of Peking, for the express purpose of preventing the necessity of collision with the provincial authorities. It was thought expedient, as well as just, to support the Imperial Government by recognizing its paramount right and duty of enforcing order. When consuls and naval officers take the law into their own hands, they furnish the Chinese Government with unanswerable grounds of complaint. It is probably true that local action secures speedier redress, and Sir Rutherford Alcock expatiates in an elaborate despatch on the difficulty of applying European rules of conduct to dealings with a nation which acknowledges a different standard of laws and morals; yet, on the whole, it is impossible to justify systematic violation of the treaty. The English Envoy, though he hesitates between two inconsistent lines of policy, has the merit of having strongly condemned the acts of Mr. Gibson and Lieutenant Gordon. Prince Kung addressed to him an indignant protest, concluding with the intimation that he might hereafter be induced to apply directly, through the Chinese Ambassador, to the English Government. As Sir Rutherford Alcock remarks, "they are evidently making progress in their diplomatic education;" and he admits that, if the Minister on the spot will not do the Chinese Government justice, "they are perfectly entitled to refer the matter in question direct by their own mission to the Home Government, and to notify to other Courts the steps taken;" yet, in this argumentative despatch to Lord Stanley, Sir R. Alcock expresses a doubt whether the method of settling difficulties by local action is not preferable. The plan of direct application to the Central Government, he says, "more consonant with treaty relations and international law, but it is also more damaging to the Emperor's power to govern the Empire, and more costly to the foreign

power resorting to it." According to his statement, the Imperial Government is almost always unwilling or unable to correct distant abuses; and he contends that the local authorities must be taught to respect treaty obligations for their own sake, if they care nothing for treaties or for the orders of their own Government. "Experience," he adds, "leads infallibly to the conclusion that, where treaties have been imposed by force on an unwilling government, as with China, they can only be upheld by similar means." It is proper to state that Sir Rutherford Alcock condemns in the strongest language the action of consuls and naval officers without the direct orders of the Minister. Lord Clarendon has expressed his readiness to extend the powers of the Minister, if he requires additional facilities for restraining his subordinates; and it cannot be doubted that the Admiral will be cautious against the too ready indulgence of his professional instincts.

In diplomatic decorum and dignity the chief statesmen of China stand on a European level. In his interview with Sir H. Keppel, the Viceroy of Canton bore himself like a polished gentleman, while the policy which he announced was equally prudent and vigorous. He had, he said, already ordered 4000 troops to march against the village which had fired on the man-of-war's boats, and he trusted that the operation would have the happiest effect. In answer to some apologetic language of Sir H. Keppel, he remarked that consuls would sometimes make mistakes, and that he had found it so with his own. "On taking leave the Viceroy renewed in the most impressive manner his expressions of esteem and regard for Sir H. Keppel, and trusted that on his next visit to Canton his Excellency would do him the honor of dining with him." On the following morning the Viceroy sent his card, with his farewell wishes, to the Admiral. It was in the course of the same day that Commodore Jones attacked the villages, in obedience to orders which had perhaps been issued before the interview. It is absurd and unjust to treat consuls and mandarins, who argue with the closeness of accomplished lawyers, as irresponsible barbarians; but the laxity of Chinese administration, and perhaps the latent dislike towards foreigners, will probably lead to the practical adoption of Sir Rutherford Alcock's policy. For the present the experiment of exclusive reliance on the Imperial Government ought to be fully tried; and, if it is necessary to recur to occasional local pressure, all the treaty powers should, if possible, be induced to adopt one common mode of action. There is, perhaps, no part of the world in which the representatives of the great civilized governments act so much in harmony. During one of the consular combats with the Chinese, an American gunboat was present, for the purpose of countenancing the English demands. Any privilege which might be withdrawn from any one of the trading communities would be immediately refused to all foreigners. In the less civilized parts of the empire it is consolatory to observe that Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries are equally liable to persecution. The relations between Europe and China will ultimately be determined rather by necessity or convenience than by deliberate policy. It has apparently not yet occurred to any Chinese diplomatist to demand satisfaction for the ill treatment of the Emperor's subjects in Australia or California. A hundredth part of the injustice which has been inflicted on harmless and useful Chinese gold diggers would, if it had been perpetrated at the expense of English or American traders in China, have been long since avenged with the aid of irresistible gunboats.

FOREIGN NEWS.

The Cuban Insurgents. The Pall Mall Gazette of June 14 says:—There appears to be no doubt that at least one vessel, equipped with warlike stores for the insurgents in Cuba, was allowed to escape from New York. The American Government stopped the Quaker City, but only after strong reinforcements for the Rebels had safely departed from the port. Of course they will compensate Spain for the consequences of this negligence? A correspondence of a New York paper called by one expedition, "ostensibly for Jamaica." Seeing that the vessel had on board arms for 5000 men and ten pieces of artillery, the authorities must have wondered what was her business at Jamaica. In future, when the exertions of the Government to stop the Quaker City are boasted of, it would be well to explain the escape of the vessels loaded with arms, which scarcely took the trouble to conceal their real destination.

Comments on our Intentions. The Pall Mall Gazette of June 14 says:—The Americans are accused of seeking to convert their recently purchased subjects in Alaska to Protestantism. A Russian priest, named Koyrin, who had been sent to Sitka for the purpose of maintaining the orthodox church there, writes to his countrymen that the cathedral had been closed by an order of the commander of the American troops, and that all the natives who intended to observe Lent had been arrested. It would be interesting to learn how the American clergy proceed in their work of conversion, as the natives know not a single word of English, while the clergymen, in all probability, know no other language.

Proposed Cession of Gibraltar. The possible cession of Gibraltar to Spain was alluded to by Mr. Goldwin Smith in his address at Ithaca on the 19th of May. Is any such plan seriously in contemplation? We can see that at the time the question was mooted of offering the Spanish throne to the Duke of Edinburgh we had a misgiving on the subject, remembering that our gratitude for the civility of the Greeks in offering their throne to the same prince led us to part with the Ionian Islands, and thinking it hardly possible that we might be induced to commit a similar act of detrimental generosity "for an idea." But we should take warning by the consequences of our surrender of this stronghold. We gave away a good depot and coaling station and the key of the Adriatic, which enabled us to overawe the factious populations of the Turkish coast.

The Ecclesiastical Council. In reply to the inquiry whether all the bishops are bound to assist at the (Ecclesiastical) Council, Cardinal Barnabo, in a letter dated April 30, 1869, answers: "It is certain, and not to be doubted, as appears from the bull of convocation itself, that every bishop is bound to be present, or, where he cannot, to appoint an ecclesiastic to represent him, explaining at the same time the legitimate motives which prevent his personal attendance. In cases in which particular circumstances will not permit a bishop to absent himself from his diocese, the Holy Father has expressed himself as not averse to granting a dispensation. It is, however, necessary that the bishop should make special application for dispensation to his Holiness himself."

An Expedition to Egypt. Sir S. Baker Pasha's force for the conquest of the Soudan will consist, we believe, of two regiments of infantry, each 600 strong, one regiment of irregulars 600 strong, two regiments of cavalry each 450 strong, two light batteries, and one heavy battery—in all a force of some 3300 men. The country is difficult, the climate very damp and feverish. There is no opposition to be apprehended in the field, but it is interesting to see how Baker Pasha, who is not a soldier, handles his little army. He has power of life and death in his command. We hope he has power to watch over his own life and health.—Army and Navy Gazette.

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